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Woven in Paint

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Woven in Paint

Isabella King

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the
Prerequisite for Honors
in Studio Art
under the advisement of Daniela Rivera & Liza Oliver

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Woven in Paint

In my house there are no curtains.

The house that I have called home for the majority of my formative years was a snapshot of the modernist architecture movement as it found its way into Ohio in the 1950s when my parents stumbled upon it in 2005. They immediately fell in love with it, despite major structural issues and a failing roof. I remember running up its crumbling concrete stairs and thinking it was the oddest house I had ever seen. There was an open garage without doors, atop which sat a coffee-brown mother-in-law suite attached to the main house by a causeway. Both were one story tall with flat roofs that hung over the house like tired slabs. My father brought his painting ladders, and we crawled along the top which was covered in a substance like pitch and pea gravel. When it rained, the roof was covered in large puddles that marked the weakest points, a roof that was not well engineered for Cincinnati's wet summers and occasional snowstorms. Inside, the house reminded me of old movies. The floor was covered with tan and brown speckled linoleum that was chipped in many places. In odd, oblong shapes like splats of paint in the middle of the floors, were dingy, dark-green carpets the texture of thick moss. My parents were stunned to find that the carpets were not area rugs, they had in fact been glued to the floor itself. My sister and I pretended they were putting greens with my dad who enjoyed his indoor put-put course only briefly before ripping up the carpet and the tile below it.

The flat roof is now gone on the main house, though it survives on the odd mother-in-law suite which now serves as my dad's office and personal storage area. In its place is a new second floor with a slanted roof that overhangs on one side of its apex, referencing the modernist spirit of the original plans. The house stands tall and gray, nestled atop a wooded hill. In the summer

when the foliage is full, there are no neighbors in sight. Perhaps this is why we never had curtains.

As a child I remember living in another house in a suburban neighborhood a stone's throw from my high school. There I played in a large, but fenced in back yard, in full sight of the surrounding houses. There we did have curtains. They were thick and heavy, hand-sewn by my mother from a dense reversible fabric that was a light khaki green on one side and a rich charcoal grey on the other. I know what color the insides were because I used to hide among them as a child. Hidden strangely within the barrier that separated the neighborly eyes and the inner domestic life, I felt like a spy. When we moved to our woodsy, modernist house on Ragland Road, the curtains stayed behind. I never thought much about their absence, except in the mornings when the light crept in, rousing me from sleep. At all times of the year, even the dead of winter when the single-paned windows let in the cold, they stayed bare. At first my mother wanted curtains, but my father insisted that it would ruin the feel of the house, the feel that you were in the woods even while inside. It became perfectly normal. Windows became a thing to look through, not a border separating in from out. The windows on the first floor were large, spanning nearly eight feet wide and reaching from knee-high to the ceiling. On either side of these large windows were three smaller ones, effectively making the entire front and side a transparent façade. When I walked up to them, the glass ceased to exist, I was among the foliage. It became a source of comfort, a source of calm.

I never thought it was strange until friends that slept over became unnerved by the large, bare windows. They said it was terrifying at night to look out and see the faint traces of a darkened forest. *What if someone looked in?* They asked. *It's like sleeping outside in a treehouse. Don't you feel exposed?* I think that if there had been curtains, even if they were

drawn open, that sense of fear would not have thrived. The hint of a barrier, or just the possibility of one, would have set their minds at ease. To them, windows were points of vulnerability, a chance for the outside world to spy in of the workings of private life. In any other house in a neighborhood, certainly prying eyes would be there watching, hoping for a glimpse of a private scandal. But at my house, only the birds and the squirrels looked in on us.

My father had to sacrifice the beauty of those bare windows after my parents separated several years ago. On a single income it is too expensive to let the windows stand naked in the coldest days of winter. Even so, my father refuses to put up real curtains, instead he tacks up moving blankets. I think the act pains him, not because the blankets look tacky, but because when it snows those bare windows make it feel as if you're right there in it among the beauty. He calls it his tree house. And though it is much too large for just him, he has hung onto it for years, even after my parents separated and my sister and I moved out. He loves his tree house, and although it has been an unsustainable financial burden, he cannot part with it. I think that is why he rarely hangs the blankets in the day, allowing himself a few hours of unobstructed viewing. I believe he counts the days until he can take them down and look into the natural world.

The story of this project does not begin there in that curtain-less treehouse that my father loves. It begins in a summer studio at Wellesley. I knew that I wanted to work with fabric. I knew that I had a deep-rooted love for the way that it folded and curved making pillowy volumes almost like flesh.

Perhaps then, this project begins, not in the house on Ragland Road, but in the house before that. The one in Turpin Hills with heavy, hand-sewn khaki curtains; my childhood home. The one with pillows my mother sewed on her grandmother's sewing machine.

Perhaps it begins with a chest of fabric scraps.

My mother spent most of her adult life as an interior designer, and every so often she would come home from work with huge swatches of discarded fabric. She could never throw away anything beautiful, so she balled them up inside a little wooden chest kept in the family room near the couch. My sister and I would dig through the chest, pulling out yards and yards of beautiful textiles. That magical box of fabrics fueled many of our creative games. We constructed forts, costumes, and palaces in the family room between the sections of our couch. Every costume we created, came not from a Halloween bag, but from those bits of cloth.

As I sat in my summer studio at Wellesley with a blank canvas in front of me, I thought a lot about my love of fabric, especially of patterned fabric. I thought about what drew my attention to a painting. I thought about my recent visits to the Museum of Fine Art and the Isabella Stuart Gardner's Museum. I remembered how when studying their collections of 16th, 17th-century and 18th-century portraiture that instead of gazing into the eyes of the sitter, I studied their garments; not as objects of fashion, but as abstract patterns and forms coming to voluminous life with each marvelously placed brushstroke. Paintings like John Singleton Copley's *Mrs. Richard Skinner*, Alessandro Allori's *Portrait of a Lady in Black and White*, and Frans Pourbus's *Isabella Clara Eugenia, Archduchess of Austria* fascinated me (figure 1, 2, & 3).¹ I studied the neat folds and masterful treatment of textures with awe and envy. I walked right up to the paintings, getting close enough to see individual brush strokes. What had been tactile and tangible lace from only a few paces away transformed into little curves and mounds of painted white lines. That moment of transition between the illusion of realism and the underlying presence of the artist's hand captivated me. I hovered there at that perfect tipping point,

¹ *Mrs. Richard Skinner* by John Singleton Copley is part of the MFA's permanent collection. *Portrait of a Lady in Black and White* by Alessandro Allori and *Isabella Clara Eugenia, Archduchess of Austria* by Frans Pourbus are part of the Isabella Stuart Gardner Museum collection.

appreciating the fine scrapes of the bristles in the smooth satin of the sitter's dress. Those tiny indexes of the painter's gesture, their hand, their presence, and their labor alternately smoothed away and exposed by mere inches. I was in awe of each painter's ability and of the illusion. I found myself wanting to replicate that.

Over the summer I experimented with painting fabric as still life, both patterned and plain. I experimented, too, with the woven structure by removing the straps off canvas bags and weaving them onto a frame in an effort to understand the underlying structure (figure 4).² Shortly afterward, I created *Woven Boards* (figure 5). I loved the texture of the painting, but something about it was paralyzing. When I talked to my advisor, Daniela, she agreed that the grid structure was too stiff, and she had me read *Grids* by Rosalind Krauss. Although I do not fully agree with argument of the essay, precisely I do not agree that grids "explicitly reject narrative," they are as Krauss herself says, logical structures that impose a kind of narrative.³ Doesn't the warp and weft of fabric share with the viewer a narrative of its making? Is the story told by a quilt negated by the grid it inhabits? Is the image produced on a computer or TV screen paralyzed by the underlying pixel structure? I think not. I will, however, allow that in that instance the grid created a "fortress" that was both "hostile" and silencing.⁴ Having partially abandoned the grid, I moved once again in the direction of organic shapes. I renewed my interest in the organic folds of fabric and its relation to the body by exploring the tension created by twisting the fabric. The next painting I created, featured a fleshy pink cloth painfully twisted at the center of a square canvas. The folds of fabric, almost indistinguishable at moments from

² Already I was experimenting with the idea of using found objects. The canvas bags that I deconstructed to create *Woven Straps: Davis Museum Freebies* predominantly came from bags left by students moving out of their dorms, many of which had been handed out for free by the Davis Museum earlier that semester.

³ Rosalind Krauss, "Grids," *October* 9 (1979): 55, accessed September/October 2017, doi:10.2307/778321.

⁴ Rosalind Krauss, "Grids," *October* 9 (1979): 55, accessed September/October 2017, doi:10.2307/778321.

folds of flesh, melt away at the edges into a green wash background (figure 6). When the painting was complete, I had trouble looking at it. There was something so viscerally violent about it. To look at it was to feel someone twisting your flesh. Despite its ability to insight strong, the composition lacked weight due to its centralized position, and ultimately failed.

As the final weeks of summer drew to a close, I decided to return my attention to the grid, but this time in the form of pattern. One of the last paintings I created before our first critique with visiting artist Sara Oppenheimer, was a large scale still life painting of a curtain decorated with a diamond grid of ribbon sewn to its surface (figure 23). I hung the fabric on a pole and allowed it to cascade onto the ground. Then, I painted the way the folds bent and creased the underlying grid. I finally thought I had found something worth pursuing, and although I was not wholly satisfied with my work or sure of its direction, I felt confident that I had something to show for myself.

The first critique, however, was brutal. Sara Oppenheimer hurled questions at me that I had no idea how to answer. She weighed out entire histories of painting and asked me to respond. I had no words. I had no clue. I thought I was doing a project about painting the tactile experience of fabric. I thought I was doing a project about the cultural heritage of patterns.⁵ She said many things, most of which rolled over me in waves. One thing, however, that I do remember, is her asking me why I don't use the fabrics themselves. That one comment steered my paintings in a whole new direction. It in fact led me to the heart of my current project's premise.

⁵ My project continues to be about the cultural heritage of fabric, however, prior to the critique I was thinking of creating a kind of index or anthology of fabrics. I recognize that that way of thinking would have stifled my project and robbed it of complexity by hindering organic growth. My current approach prioritizes an initial attraction to the fabric over fitting into a particular category.

I already had some fabric samples at hand from the various still lifes I set up over the course of the summer, most of which were curtains from thrift stores. You would think that my choice to use curtains stemmed from a desire to psychologically understand their function in our lives, but the truth was a question of economy. It was the cheapest and most readily accessible source of large pieces of textiles. Many of those first fabrics I never intended to be stretched over canvas frames, they were meant to be subjects of still life paintings. Before my first critique, I had planned to create large, monumental paintings of only fabric. I imagined that these paintings would make some sort of commentary on the history of drapery painting and the way sitters often posed themselves in their finest cloths and surrounded by their finest possessions regardless of logical sense. “The carpet-covered table shown with books, a handwritten letter or manuscript, and an inkwell...refers to a long tradition in European painting, in which carpets are associated not only with economic and social status in general, but also with learning and literacy” (figure 7).⁶ In other examples, such as in Johannes Vermeer’s *A Maid Asleep* and *Young Woman with Water Pitcher* the inclusion of the rug not only plays into the “the tradition of showing carpets on tables in upper-class interiors” it serves to display the painter’s skill (figure 8 & 9).⁷ Due to European painters’ fascination with oriental rugs, much of the information and surviving records of Islamic rugs exists in paintings.⁸ In fact “many groups of Islamic carpets from the Middle East are today called by the names of European painters who depicted.”⁹ The use of these beautiful rugs as mere symbols of status was painful to me, I wanted to free them. I wanted to make them something worth praising on their own.

⁶ Walter Denny, "Islamic Carpets in European Paintings | Essay | Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History | The Metropolitan Museum of Art," The Met's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, October 2011, accessed March 22, 2018, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/isca/hd_isca.htm.

⁷ Walter Denny, "Islamic Carpets in European Paintings

⁸ Walter Denny, "Islamic Carpets in European Paintings

⁹ Walter Denny, "Islamic Carpets in European Paintings

In my own paintings, I imagined that I would isolate the drapery, and that by removing the person I would create a direct line to the fabric, so it could express itself without the oppression of a human sitter. I was, however, nervous about creating paintings that played into the “impulse to dress modern artists’ models in fake antique drapery.”¹⁰ I worried that “even when technical mastery and stylistic control over drapery had been achieved” it would look “slightly ridiculous” simply because of the antiquated role that still life plays in modern art.¹¹ I planned to circumvent these problems through scale. Increasing the scale would force the paintings to have a physical presence that defied the normal strictures of still life. Visually and technically I imagined them to be similar to the painting of burlap that I created for my introduction to painting final project (Figure 10 & 11). That project for me had always felt unfinished or at least not exhausted. It was the first time that I realized that I could emulate detail without painting each individual pixel. I experimented with ways of portraying the woven texture of burlap without spending an insane amount of time on each individual stitch and discovered that if I painted an initial layer as a smooth surface conveying the highlights and the shadows, I could add a layer of glaze on top that I could scrape in a cross-hatching pattern. It was, for me, an introduction to the power of illusion in painting, a power that excited my desire to paint the tactile experience of objects. I wanted to create work that made people want to reach out and touch them. I wanted to create paintings that people wanted to get close to. I wanted them to feel the way I did studying the portraits by master painters in the MFA and the Isabella Stuart Gardner museum.¹² I wanted them to experience the cross section between visual and tactile

¹⁰ Anne Hollander, "The Fabric of Vision: The Role of Drapery in Art," *Georgia Review* 29, no. 2 (1975): 415-416.

¹¹ Anne Hollander, "The Fabric of Vision: The Role of Drapery in Art," *Georgia Review* 29, no. 2 (1975): 415-416.

¹² As mentioned earlier, part of my fascination with portrayal of fabric textures in traditional portrait painting has to do with how the hand of the painter reveals itself the closer you get, and how the realism of the illusion increases the further away you get. The point of interest then is the transition between illusion and exposure.

experience. After my critique with Sara Oppenheimer I realized that the paintings I imagined making would be inevitably deadened by the history of drapery painting, with or without figures. Conveying tactile experience would not be enough. I would have to approach it differently.

The first piece I created in response to my critique with Sara Oppenheimer was a triptych entitled *Three Knots on Indian Chintz* (figure 12). I began by stretching a beautiful pink chintz over the bars with the wrong side of the fabric facing out to capture the subtle fade of the dyes. I then painted a writhing, white satin fabric over its surface. The fabric curled around knots which acted as painful points of twisting. The white fabric imposed on the densely patterned surface and the aerial perspective, read as pop-art in a way that defied still life despite its realism. The struggling folds of white fabric resist, too, the connotation of a peace offering. After completing *Three Knots on Indian Chintz*, I realized with sudden excitement that I had found my project. I had found a way to paint fabric that was not stifled by history and strangled by still life.

As I continued to peruse the local thrift stores in search of fabrics, I was struck by the variety of styles, colors, and textures that I found there. Some were, in my opinion, horribly comical. They were fabrics that I myself could not imagine choosing. This prompted me to think about the ways in which people choose to adorn their domestic space. Just as “costume or clothing houses our bodies in ways that reflect our responses to the call for persona,” domestic fabrics, too, act as agents of identity creation.¹³ Clothing and domestic decoration, especially when thought of in terms of fashion, are projections meant for the outside, yet they also serve as barriers between the private self and the outer world. Curtains specifically, veil the inner domestic life from the outside world.

¹³ Nina Felshin, "Womens Work," *Art Journal* 54, no. 1 (1995): , doi:10.1080/00043249.1995.10791681.

These curtains, like discarded clothing, are the rags of a past history. They are the witnesses to our own private dramas, and traumas, as they play out behind closed doors—and behind closed curtains. When the eyes of the prying public cannot play the witness, our human minds, ever social in our understanding of the world, assign that role to the inanimate objects. The objects—and in this case, too, patterns—become imbued with a secret world of their own as the mute witnesses of our lives. That is why when I see the pattern that I lovingly nicknamed “baroque chicken,” I think first of my grandmother’s house and her little chicken figurines. She chose to adorn her domestic space with chickens despite once admitting to me that she hates them as animals (figure 13).¹⁴ The chickens of real life are separated from those used for decoration. As decorations they serve as markers of identity and belonging to her generation and regional culture. As a consequence, I now associate chicken decorations with my grandmother’s house and the memories that took place there. The pattern and my memories have fused to form an unbreakable link. Whether we realize it or not, we are aware of the object’s past life. I cannot claim to separate my pieces from their past lives with people who I have never met. These once domestic objects have been raised up and re-appropriated as art, yet they are still curtains. They are “rags,” which, “like all recycled materials, embod[y] histories and references that then bec[o]me part of the meaning of the pieces.”¹⁵

I began to think more about how, through painting, I could understand that choice. I found that the imposition of the first triptych was just that, an imposition. It did not seek to understand through examination, it sought to highlight by contrast. I realized that in order to understand the inner workings of how one creates identity through the decoration of their personal space, I would have to *insert* myself into these fabrics and *inhabit* them like second

¹⁴ My grandparents in fact kept chickens in addition and a small one-acre garden plot for many years.

¹⁵ Nina Felshin, “Womens Work,” *Art Journal* 54, no. 1 (1995).

skins. This led me to *Baroque Chicken Meets the History of Drapery* (figure 14, & 14A). I chose the fabric precisely because it was the kind of pattern that I could not imagine myself using to decorate, although it was one that I was sure my grandmother, with her love of chicken motifs, would adore. The wide bands of mock-embroidery alternating with stripes of blue create a readily penetrable image (figure 13). I painted a heavy, pinkish cloth that hung and tangled between those bars of pattern.¹⁶ The painted fabric holds odd areas of tension that do not correspond to any structure in the pattern, creating a somewhat disturbing quality in which the fabric is both remarkably heavy and yet remarkably ungrounded.¹⁷

I was initially very pleased with *Baroque Chicken Meets the History of Drapery Painting* and believed that I was moving in the right direction, but the more I stared at it, the more I felt that it too was an imposition like the triptych before it. I had *infiltrated* the pattern, but I had not understood it in the intimate way I wished. I realized that I would have to participate in a kind of domestic camouflage instead. I would have to trace my path of discovery through the fabric without imposing and conquering it. In response to this desire I painted *Ribbon Series: Domestic Camouflage* (figure 15 & 16). In these paintings fanciful ribbons curl and wind around the elements of two chintz patterns stretched across forty-inch square canvases. The ribbons begin their journey in the upper left hand of the composition and snake their way through the pattern toward the bottom right. The ribbons accumulate and curl in on themselves in the same way patterns accumulate meanings and associations. Their path weaves in and out of the flat chintz, challenging the two-dimensionality of the pattern. By forcing the design to occupy a three-dimensional space, the ribbons force the pattern to speak.

¹⁶ I would not call the fabric painted on this surface “woven.” It lacks the either fanciful twirls or logical construction that “woven” connotes in my mind. It is instead draped or tangled between the bars.

¹⁷ The folds of this painting heavily reference depictions of fabric in frescos and early renaissance art in which fabric is often treated as a solid immobile object, not a flowing thing subject to motion and life.

While critiquing the ribbon paintings, Daniela and I realized that to confine these objects histories to only their past owners would be too simplistic. They, like people, have ancestors. We decided to call in Liza Oliver of the art history department to help us identify which visual traditions these fabrics belonged to. Before the start of this project, chintz was a pattern that I equated with the height of the oppressive western domesticity, and a pattern that I did not even know the name of until Liza told me. She provided me with readings and general background knowledge to help me better understand the fabrics I was most drawn to. The research that I pursued is detailed in the following paragraphs.

The word chintz as used in a modern context denotes “any floral printed furnishing fabric, made of cotton or linen, and often glazed.”¹⁸ One could argue that the definition expands even further to include fabric printed, painted, woven or otherwise in any material used for a variety of purposes. This overly broad modern definition is confusing when the original meaning of chintz is considered. The word first appears in 17th-century East India Company log books and is most likely “derived from the north Indian word *chint* meaning to sprinkle or spray.”¹⁹ The Portuguese too called them “*pintado*” meaning spotted.²⁰ English and Portuguese traders were most likely referencing the speckled backgrounds of some chintz patterns that fell out of favor once they were altered for European tastes. The historic definition of chintz is: cotton fabrics produced in India using a combination of mordant and resist dyeing as well as hand painting, and as kalamkari in India. The disparity between the modern and historic usage has prompted some, like the Victoria Albert Museum, to adopt the term “cotton paintings” to specifically mean Indian textiles that were painted in contrast to their cheaper printed counterparts.²¹

¹⁸ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 8.

¹⁹ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 9.

²⁰ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 9.

²¹ John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 2.

The technique used by Indian artisans to create these fabrics is complex, involving many different steps and chemical processes. The decline of traditional printing as well as technological advances make it difficult to determine the exact techniques historically used; however, several European accounts of the process have survived. There are small disparities which could be explained by a lack of understanding of the process or regional variations within India itself. Based upon the records that do exist we can surmise the following general steps for the creation of kalamkari chintz fabrics²²

1. Workers prepared bleached cotton with a “solution of fat and astringent” usually achieved by a mix of “buffalo’s milk and myrobalan,” followed by “bleeting” the fabric, which consisted of beating it between two wooden surfaces to get a smooth paintable outer layer.
2. The pattern was then drawn on the design by “pouncing” or “dusting charcoal through perforated outlines.”
3. Workers then drew over the design with mordents with a “pen made of two reeds pressed together.” Different kinds of mordent were used to achieve different colors. Black was attained through acetate or iron while red was attained through alum tinted with sappan wood.
4. The cloth was then dipped into a vat of dye “derived from chay, a plant in the madder family” which was best grown in the coastal areas of the Krishna River Delta that was rich in calcium deposits from decomposing seashells.²³
5. The entire cloth was then covered in beeswax, except for portions designated to be blue or green, with a bamboo brush “fitted with metal points.”
6. At this stage, the cloth was usually sent to a separate set of workers “of a different caste” who were experts in the art of indigo dyeing. This practice was not uncommon, and many families working to produce chintz subcontracted in this way.²⁴
7. The beeswax was then removed in boiling water.
8. Another layer of wax was applied to maintain any white areas, then a new layer of mordents was applied with varying levels of alum and tinted sappan wood to achieve tones ranging from pink to deep red. “The addition of Iron gave violet”
9. The cloth was again dipped in a vat of chay dye.

²² John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 8.

Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 10.

²³ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 10.

²⁴ John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 7.

10. Finishing touches of yellow and green were hand painted on with “a yellow dye of vegetable origin, mixed sometimes with myrobolan and chay to produce local yellow” or green if layered over blue areas.
11. The fabrics were then “burnished with a shell or beaten with wooden mallets to produce a shiny surface” which has usually worn away in surviving examples.²⁵

What is striking about these steps within the context of my work are the parallels between my methodology as a painter and the methodology used by Indian “cotton painters.” Before knowing the history of these fabrics, or the ways in which they were prepared, I developed a method that dealt with some of the same issues. The initial preparation of the fabric with “solution of fat and astringent” mentioned above was a kind of priming to assure that the dye did not bleed once applied. In my own process I was forced to face the issue of priming head on. I could not paint directly onto the fabrics without priming in some way because the paint would bleed and diffuse.²⁶ I experimented first with acrylic based clear mediums, but they were not nearly as clear as I would have liked and once stretched they gradually made the fabric loosen over its bars. I then turned to PVA, which I applied to both sides of fabric as a clear primer, sealing the fabric and transforming it into a paintable surface. While this method worked for most fabrics, one fabric in particular reacted very strangely to the PVA. It became incredibly stiff, warping and bubbling in a way that could not be fixed through stretching since the fabric tore easily when pressure was applied. I was forced then to prime only the areas I wished to paint. I would first create a paper cut-out that I then traced with a pencil directly onto the unprimed fabric. Once this was complete, I meticulously filled in the outline with normal acrylic gesso. The process of cutting out and tracing my design mirrors the “pouncing” done by Indian artisans.

²⁵ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 8.

²⁶ I in fact tried to paint directly onto fabric with varying results, however I realized that in order to achieve uniform results I would have to prime my fabrics.

Another comparison exists between the act of painting with oils and the act of painting with mordant and wax resists. This was especially true for *Ribbon Series: Domestic Camouflage*, in which I dragged a brush with a base layer of color across the fabrics surface, keeping the brush level as I wove between elements of the pattern, to mimic the structure of a cascading ribbon. The initial mark acted as a base layer to which I added highlights and darks in layered stages.

Lastly, the similarity in methods can be seen in the slow nature of the work. According to observer Daniel Havart, Indian laborers worked “very slowly, like snails which creep on and appear not to advance.”²⁷ This led him to conclude that, “he who would wish to depict Patience would need no other object than such a painter of Palicol [Palakollu].”²⁸ This prompts me to assert that perhaps a person looking to depict patience should walk into the studio of any artist working to achieve some sort of realistic likeness to their model.²⁹ All joking aside, the experience of tediousness and of labor was important in my process to better understand the time involved in the making of fabrics via traditional methods.

The slow, laborious process executed by Indian artisans was in place long before contact with Europeans. Some early artisans created chintz for “indigenous courts or for export to Persia” while others produced “temple hangings with Hindu mythological subject matter” centuries earlier.³⁰ Evidence suggests that Indian block-printed cottons were being traded with

²⁷ John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 7.

²⁸ John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 7.

²⁹ Humor aside the practice of making art can be a tedious one, a true labor of love in which a seemingly infinite number of small things must be executed over and over to achieve the vision for a piece that entered your head in mere seconds. That moment of completion however is the most satisfying thing that I know.

³⁰ John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 7.

South Asia as early as the 5th century.³¹ Both Hindu and Muslim workers were involved in the makings of these fabrics and they passed down their techniques through “hereditary guilds.”³²

Significant differences in style and subject matter existed between the Golconda Muslim-ruled region and the Hindu-ruled region. While the Golconda region focused on Islamic and Persian subject matter and used borders inspired by “contemporary Persian pile-carpet designs,” the Hindu ruled area featured Hindu elements including architectural framework and with borders characterized by human figures, fauna, and flora.³³ Even before contact with European traders, chintz designs were heavily influenced by Persian art and imagery. Two of the most noticeable Persian elements found in chintz fabrics, especially those depicting a tree of life were the “highly conventionalized rockery or hillock (sometimes scale-like...and sometimes with rocks resembling brightly colored sponges” (figure 17).³⁴ These rock pattern conventions can be found in many miniatures in 15th-century and 16th-century Persian Art, which Indian workers would have referenced.³⁵ The Indian interpretation of rocks in the tree of life patterns show “the Indian copyist’s naive misunderstanding of those rocky landscapes in Persian paintings where one finds trees with their roots partly exposed on the inhospitable rocky surface.”³⁶ It is important to note here, that Persian art was heavily influenced by China beginning in the 13th century, especially in the context of “the treatment of rocks and rocky landscapes.”³⁷ As we can see, prior to European contact the imagery used by Indian artisans was not entirely Indian, it had been mutated and transformed by means of cultural exchange and appropriation.

³¹ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009)

³² Liza Oliver, *Chapter Manuscript, The Threads That Bind: South Asian Textiles and Networks of Exchange Between India and France*, 3.

³³ John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 13-15.

³⁴ John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 8.

³⁵ A pattern of rock of the sponge-like variety can be seen in my painting series *In the Dirt: Tree of Life*.

³⁶ John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 7.

³⁷ John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 8.

Europeans that came to India as part of the Dutch and English East India Companies in the 17th century were wholly uninterested in chintz, in both its cheaper and finer forms, as commodities for the European market. Originally, European interests lay in their use as a currency for the spice trade in South-East Asia where the Dutch and English East India Company's economic interests resided.³⁸ The only other context in which European traders sought out Indian textiles was for trade with Africa.³⁹ In neither of these situations were Indian textiles the target of their trade, they were simple means to an end as we can see by the following description of their use in the spice trade.

Ships sailed from Holland and England with bullion to be exchanged in India for textile piece-goods. The Indian piece goods were then carried by the same ships to Malay archipelago and bartered there for spices. Finally, the same ships returned direct to Europe laden with spices, which were then converted into bullion for another round of the same journey.⁴⁰

Although European traders did not take interest in the cloths themselves until the mid 17th century, small quantities of chintz fabrics made their way into England, perhaps as excess from the spice trade, as early as 1613.⁴¹ Though these early fabrics were not tailored for European tastes, “as novelties they were eagerly coveted.”⁴² European traders watched with keen interest the popularity of this small number of chintzes and began to envision expanding their trade to European markets.

After the first batches of Indian textiles reached European consumers, merchants realized that in order to bolster their profits they needed to alter the Indian patterns to suite European sensibilities, especially within the well-established taste for “chinoiserie,” a westernized version

³⁸ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 14.

³⁹ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 14.

⁴⁰ John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 3.

⁴¹ John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 3.

⁴² John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 3.

of Chinese style, imagery and architecture.⁴³ At this time period, common European knowledge of Asian geography was so limited that many consumers were not aware of a difference between China, Persia, South-East Asia, and India, and found Hindu culture to be “incontrovertibly alien.”⁴⁴ Subsequently, the first batch of fabrics which were presumably the closest to true “Indian” chintz were not readily recognized by Western consumers as oriental, although they were recognized as foreign. In order to remedy this, European merchants and traders began sending back requests. One of the first requests made by European traders was to alter the backgrounds of the fabrics.

Those which hereafter you shall send we desire may be with more white ground, and the flowered and branch to be in colors in the middle of the quilt as the painter pleases, whereas now the most part your quilts come with sad red grounds which are not equally sorted to please all buyers...⁴⁵

These alterations translated well into sales and by 1662 merchants began sending pattern books or “musters” for Indian painters to copy.⁴⁶ Crewel work examples and etched printed images of Dutch flower paintings were provided later on in the 18th century,⁴⁷ as evidenced by the “use of stripling and cross-hatching to suggest an engraved effect.”⁴⁸ This began a long process of cultural exchange and appropriation with European style fueled by economic motives. The process of cultural exchange, however, began long ago with other groups including the Persians and the Chinese. Due to the use of pattern books and other reference materials provided by European merchants, images of flowers and other natural elements native to Europe found their

⁴³ John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 4.

⁴⁴ John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 4.

⁴⁵ India Office records, Factory Record Miscellaneous, vol. 12, f.99. A letter dated 27th November, 1643, addressed to the directors of the Company to their agent at Surat. John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 4.

⁴⁶ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 15.

⁴⁷ Crewel work is decorative embroidery done with crewel yarn on cotton or linen, using simple stitches traditionally worked in floral or pastoral designs.

⁴⁸ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 15.

way into Indian designs. Like the Indian misinterpretation of the trees growing in Persia's rocky landscape, Indian cotton painters often created fanciful renderings of native European flora and fauna that were inaccurate.⁴⁹ These inaccuracies were not, however, detrimental to their value. They in fact were valuable precisely because they were perceived as exotic.⁵⁰ This created an odd situation in which the product being made was foreign to both the consumer and the producer.⁵¹

Some researchers suggest that the cultural exchange and/or appropriation of imagery was muddled, and it is difficult to see concretely where certain motifs began. Research has shown that the flowering branches pattern often found in chintz could be European in origin based upon embroidered wall hangings that predate trade with India (figure 18).⁵² However, gaps in evidence make this conclusion tentative. Regardless, it is impossible to ignore the power dynamics involved in 18th-century cultural exchange or the East India Company's increased control over the Indian economy, which was the precursor to English colonization of India. The colonization and oppression of India continued well into the 20th century causing much suffering at the hands of British rulers.

Trade with India threatened Europe's local textile production, which accounted for a sizable chunk of the European economy. Prior to contact with India, European textile production was primarily based in guilds of weavers working with native fibers such as linen and wool.⁵³ Using traditional European methods, patterns and colors were achieved either through impermanent vegetable dyes or extensive embroidery.⁵⁴ The Indian cottons that flooded the

⁴⁹ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 24.

⁵⁰ John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 17.

⁵¹ John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 16.

⁵² John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 19.

⁵³ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 15.

⁵⁴ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 15.

European market were prized for their color-fast dyes and the breathability in addition to being easy to wash.⁵⁵ European vegetable-based dyes were not nearly as bright as their Indian counterparts and could not be laundered fully because the dyes would not stay through washing. This was especially a problem with wool garments in the summer months but was also a problem even with lighter materials like linen or silk. For these reasons cotton fabrics from India became extremely popular first as furnishing fabrics, then as clothing for the lower classes.⁵⁶ However, by the late 17th century and into the 18th, chintzes were being used by fashionable and noble ladies in France, England and Holland—including Madame de Pompadour the mistress of Louis XV—for some of their most prized garments (figure 1 & 19).⁵⁷ Since women of different socioeconomic classes adopted chintz “for the first time, and to the dismay of many, servants were indistinguishable by their dress from their mistresses.”⁵⁸ Upper class women seeking to maintain their social distinction remedied this problem by “wearing fashionable (but relatively cheap) chintz on the outside of their gowns, which were lined with expensive velvet and gold cloth” or silk, and some were even painted with gold in the same way wall-hangings were gilded.⁵⁹

Considering the popularity of Indian chintz, it is no wonder that it began to disrupt and subsequently supplant local textile production. English and French weavers, dyers, embroidery workers, and others saw their livelihoods threatened. These skilled artisans held weight with the English and French governments and placed increasing pressure on them to ban the importation of chintz to protect their native economies. The French, mainly concerned for the wellbeing of

⁵⁵ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 15.

⁵⁶ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 16.

⁵⁷ John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 30.

⁵⁸ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 16.

⁵⁹ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 16.

their silk industry, banned chintz in 1686.⁶⁰ Meanwhile in England, weavers' frustrations culminated in 1697 when "5,000 English weavers mobbed the House of Commons" which led to a series of laws attempting to ban chintz.⁶¹ The English banned the importation of chintz fabrics in 1701. These measures, however, did little to curb the craze for chintz and it continued to enter the country through smuggling, made particularly easy due to a loophole which allowed chintz to be imported to England as long as it was destined for re-exportation. This loophole was designed to keep England active in other markets, most notably the African slave trade and the spice trade where such goods were highly prized.⁶² In the 1730s Indian chintz accounted for 18.5% of trade with Senegambia in West Africa, the other major goods being metals.⁶³ It has been suggested that the success of the cotton industry, especially as it expanded within Europe itself and to the Americas, owes itself to the slave trade.⁶⁴

Hostilities between displaced local textile artisans and the English government continued to increase until 1712, when an angry group of weavers from Spitalfields "made a dramatic physical assault on wearers and sellers of Indian calicoes and on the English printers of Indian Cotton."⁶⁵ During their attack "chintz dresses were torn from women's backs and printing establishments were destroyed."⁶⁶ Amendments to existing laws in 1721 extended the ban to include the use of chintz itself, with another important loophole stating that any chintz that entered the country prior to the ban was allowed to remain. Proving a fabric's date of importation

⁶⁰ John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 5.

⁶¹ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 25.

⁶² Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 25.

⁶³ M. Berg, "In Pursuit of Luxury: Global History and British Consumer Goods in the Eighteenth Century," *Past & Present* 182, no. 1 (2004): 110.

⁶⁴ Joseph E. Inikori, "Slavery and the Revolution in Cotton Textile Production in England," *Social Science History* 13, no. 4 (1989): 356.

⁶⁵ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 25.

⁶⁶ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2009), 25.

was nearly impossible, so many continued to use chintz for clothing and furnishings.⁶⁷ These additional amendments did curb trade some, but even so the demand for Indian fabrics remained high. The ban was not lifted in England until 1774.⁶⁸

Since chintz was only available for those who were well connected to smuggling operations and were willing to act outside of the law, many people were forced to use scraps of chintz fabrics to create clothing and bed coverings, beginning a trend for quilted chintzes and “patchwork or appliqué embroidery.”⁶⁹ It wasn’t until Europeans developed their own color-fast dyeing methods based heavily off Indian techniques, that the threat to local textile industries subsided and the bans were subsequently lifted in.

From the beginning, European merchants were eager to discover the means by which Indian artisans produced such quality fabrics and sent people to observe the practices and return back with that information.⁷⁰ English and French producers made significant strides in printing technology, including the use of copper-plate printers and roller printers.⁷¹ Once native textile production strengthened, the desire for specifically Indian chintzes faded, effectively ending trade. However, the imagery and taste for oriental style fabrics remained and continued to thrive in Europe. In France especially, chintz patterns morphed into bucolic scenes and florals whose designs owe everything to the chintz fabrics they sought to imitate (figure 22, 22A, 22B).⁷²

The revival of the textile Industry in Europe, however, did not mean the end of exploitation. Textile factories and mills, which played a crucial role in the Industrialization Revolution, were notoriously cruel to their workers, most of whom were women and children.

⁶⁷ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West*(London: V & A Publications, 2009), 25.

⁶⁸ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West*(London: V & A Publications, 2009), 25.

⁶⁹ John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *Origins of Chintz* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1970), 20.

⁷⁰ Sarah Grant, *Toiles De Jouy: French Printed Cottons* (London: V & A Publishing, 2010), 12.

⁷¹ Rosemary Crill and Ian Thomas, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West*(London: V & A Publications, 2009), 24.

⁷² Sarah Grant, *Toiles De Jouy: French Printed Cottons* (London: V & A Publishing, 2010), 13.

Conditions in early industrial textile mills were notoriously bad, being described by some as “hellish.”⁷³ The air was heavy with the fluff of excess cotton, deafeningly loud, and often hot from the constant work of machinery making it difficult to breathe.⁷⁴ In addition, the machinery could be dangerous to operate, and many workers found themselves maimed, losing fingers and hands. Once injured, there was little protection provided and employers more often than not fired crippled workers without compensation.⁷⁵ Children often made up a significant portion of the labor force because they would work for less and because mills, especially those powered by natural water located in rural areas, had trouble recruiting adult labor.⁷⁶ Such mills often specifically recruited pauper children. Prior to the mid 19th century, little regulation of child labor existed and many reform groups made it their mission to end child labor or at least improve the lives of affected children.⁷⁷ They pushed for, and succeeded in securing a law in 1833 that would bar children under nine from working in mills powered by steam, and limited the hours of children older than that to nine hours a day, forty-eight hours a week.⁷⁸ This law, however, did not apply to the silk industry. In addition, the law stated that children must attend schools and if no school existed that mill owners must provide one. These rules were often not followed, and mills created schools within the factory so that employed children could work while “attending” school.⁷⁹ Needless to say, conditions for children did not improve much. It wasn’t until factories transitioned to steam power and were able to locate themselves in cities, away from direct water

⁷³ Clark Nardinelli, "Child Labor and the Factory Acts," *The Journal of Economic History* 40, no. 04 (1980): 740.

⁷⁴ Peggy S. Lai and David C. Christiani, Current Opinion in Pulmonary Medicine, March 2013, , accessed April 27, 2018, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3725301/>.

⁷⁵ Ruth Awad, "Insureon Blog," Insureon, , accessed April 27, 2018, <https://www.insureon.com/blog/post/2014/05/06/history-of-workers-comp.aspx>.

⁷⁶ Clark Nardinelli, "Child Labor and the Factory Acts," *The Journal of Economic History* 40, no. 04 (1980): 740.

⁷⁷ Clark Nardinelli, "Child Labor and the Factory Acts," *The Journal of Economic History* 40, no. 04 (1980): 741.

⁷⁸ Clark Nardinelli, "Child Labor and the Factory Acts," *The Journal of Economic History* 40, no. 04 (1980): 741.

⁷⁹ Clark Nardinelli, "Child Labor and the Factory Acts," *The Journal of Economic History* 40, no. 04 (1980): 742.

sources, that the labor force began shifting toward adults, most of whom were women.⁸⁰ Textile factories continued to be dangerous places and frequent sites of fires until regulations were put in place in the late 1800s.⁸¹ In addition, women were often paid very little, with the assumption that they were not supporting themselves, but merely supplementing the incomes of their families or husbands.

It is also important to remember, that while the textile industry was growing in Europe, so was the slave-based economy and King Cotton in the American South. Raw materials for European and New England mills were increasingly supplied by slave-run cotton plantations. Slaves worked incredibly long hours and were bought and sold like cattle in markets, which destroyed families and separated mothers from children. In addition, masters and overseers frequently sexually abused their female slaves, treating them as objects and breeders. It is important then to realize that the entire textile industry relied on raw materials obtained by the suffering of American and West Indian black slaves.

Upon learning about the history of chintz fabrics and the textile industry more generally, I felt extremely conflicted. I saw clearly that the story of these fabrics and their patterns was tied up in a long history of cultural exploitation and appropriation at the hands of white Europeans and later on Americans. I worried that my position as a white female artist from a middle-class background studying at an elite private college, did not give me the right to talk about or work with these fabrics. Who has a right to talk about whose pain? Whose suffering matters more? The moral question in front of me was paralyzing. I did not create any work for three weeks

⁸⁰ Beth English, "Wage-Earning Women Work and Community in Virginia's Cotton Textile Industry," in *Virginia Women* (University of Georgia Press, 2016), 52.

⁸¹ "History of Fire Safety," Fire Net, accessed April 22, 2018, <http://www.fire.org.uk/history-of-fire-safety.html>.

because I wondered about the ethics of my project.⁸² It made me take a step back and think to myself, at what point did chintz become so nativized in Western Culture that modern viewers, formerly including myself, were wholly unaware of their geographic origins and in fact equate them with the height of oppressive Western domestic ideals? The issue of cultural appropriation is one that any artist working from a position of privilege should consider before dealing with another culture's imagery, or in this case another culture's pain. In the end I decided that as long as I acknowledge my position and the position held by my ancestors, that I do have a right to work with these materials. After all, how will artists such as myself ever be on the right side of history if they cannot address issues such as these.

For my final two pieces, *Quilted* and *In the Dirt: Tree of Life* I sought to acknowledge that history more fully (figure 20, 20A, 20B, 20C, 20D, & 21). I felt that painting ribbons or swatches of cloth overtop was a claim over the fabrics that failed to reveal their complex pasts. I did not want to lay claim over these fabrics or their histories; I wanted instead to make the viewer consider more concretely the laborer's story whose presence exists in every mutation of chintz in existence today. I decided that these paintings needed a human component and that the best way of accomplishing that was to paint hands emerging from the pattern. Their fingers, representing the exploited laborers of the past, curl around and grab elements of the two-dimensional pattern, finally laying claim to their history.⁸³ Due to the subtlety of the gray-scale hands, they blend into the background, mimicking the way the stories, trials, and suffering of individual people have been erased in time. Upon first glance, the pattern appears undisturbed, however, upon closer examination, the hands emerge. Once they have been seen, they cannot be

⁸² To be more clear, while I did not make any work using curtains or fabric in that time, I did produce a number of collages which are addressed in an Addendum located at the end of this section and in figures A-K

⁸³ There is of course a feminist reading of these hands. They desperately cling to the pattern, eager to break out, eager to escape, yet they blend in and fade away.

unseen. That moment in which the viewer finally notices their presence, is the moment they are confronted with the history and made to question it.

In the end, I don't think that the core idea of my project changed after the making of that first triptych. Before research, I was thinking about fabrics as repositories of memory in domestic spaces that we associate with particular personal memories or identities. This way of thinking still holds true, and if anything is expanded by the addition of my historical research. Within the Hindu tradition it is believed that "holiness or pollution could be absorbed by the porous weave of a textile and transmitted to the worshipers who owned them."⁸⁴ Although this use of fabric is religious in practice, the idea of absorption bears some resemblance to the idea of psychological weight and residual memory that the initial project was based on. Fabrics are, in fact, repositories of cultural memory as well. They carry with them not only the psychological weight of our immediate personal lives, but also carry the weight of history. These rich cultural, historic, and personal signifiers are the part of the woven network that constitutes our experiences past present and future.

⁸⁴ Liza Oliver, *Chapter Manuscript, The Threads That Bind: South Asian Textiles and Networks of Exchange Between India and France*, 5.

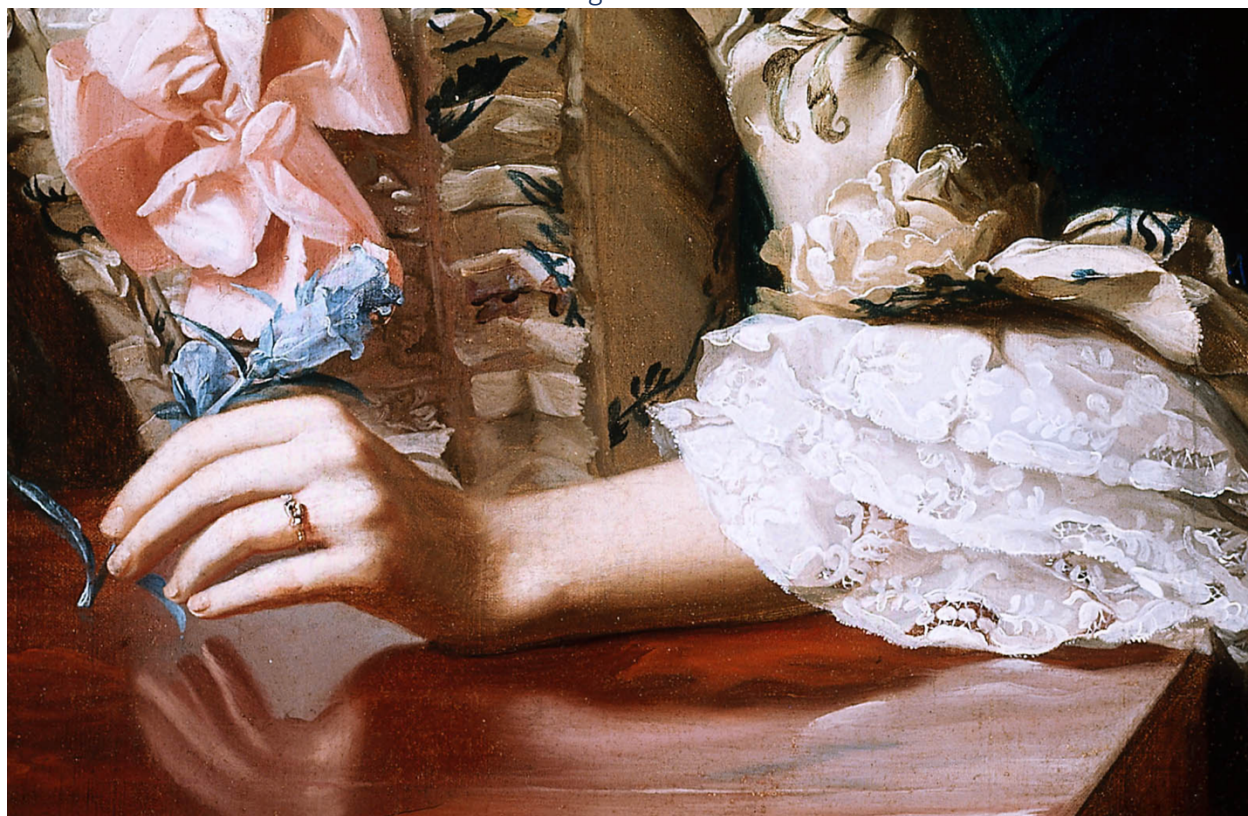
Figures

Figure 1



Mrs. Richard Skinner (Dorothy Wendell)
John Singleton Copley 1772
Oil on Canvas, 39 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 30 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.

Figure 1 A



Detail from, *Mrs. Richard Skinner (Dorothy Wendell)*
John Singleton Copley 1772
Oil on Canvas, 39 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 30 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.

Figure 2

*Portrait of a Lady in Black and White, about 1590-1599*

Alessandro Allori

Oil on poplar panel, 38 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 27 $\frac{11}{16}$ in.

Figure 3

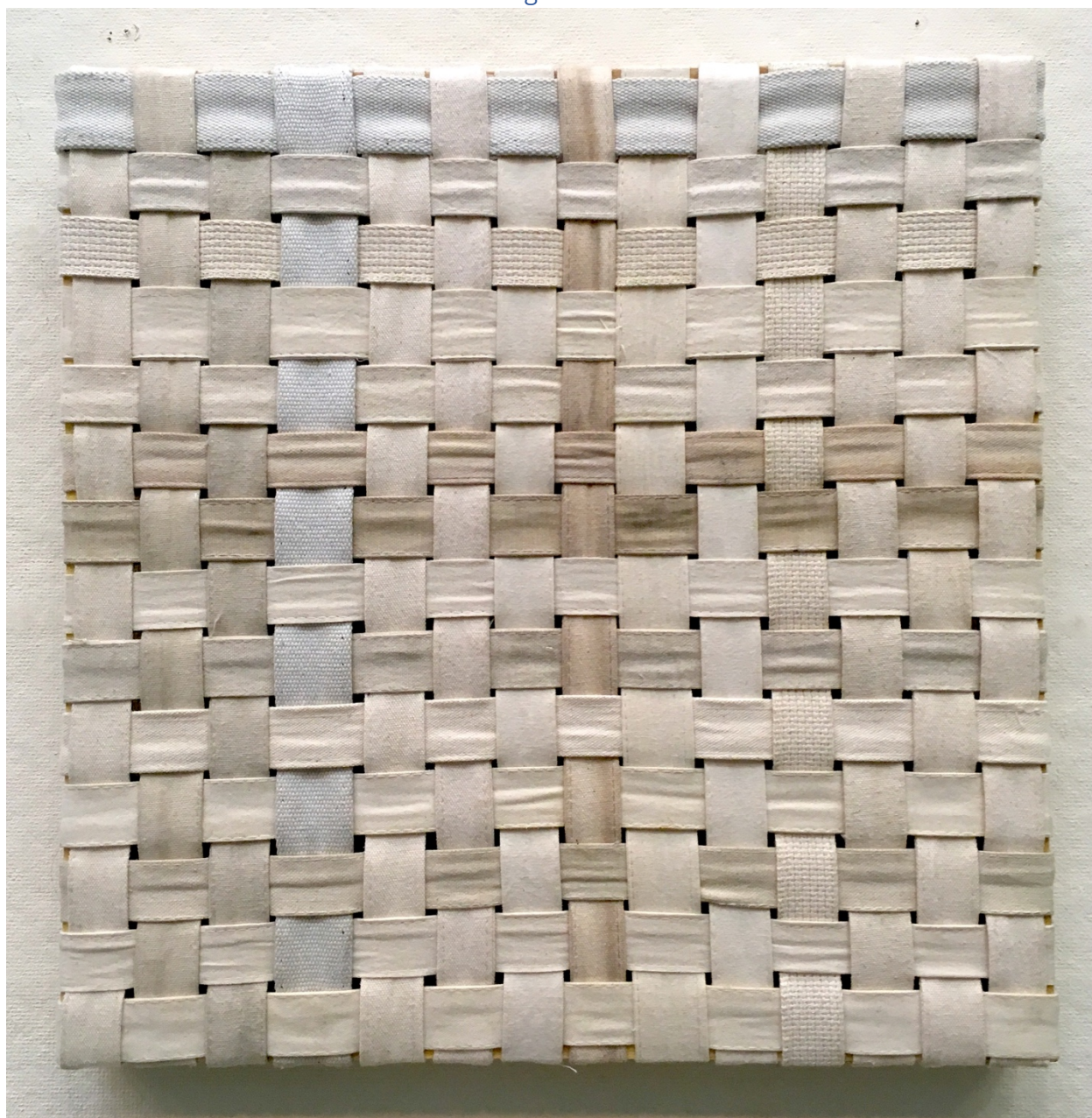


Isabella Clara Eugenia, Archduchess of Austria about 1600

Frans Pourbus

Oil on canvas, 53 1/8 x 38 11/16 in.

Figure 4



Woven Straps: Davis Museum Freebies
Isabella King
16 x 16 in.

Figure 5



Woven Boards
Isabella King
Oil on Canvas, 26 x 44 in.

Figure 6



Untitled
Isabella King
Oil on Canvas, 35 x 35 in.

Figure 7



Jacques-Louis Leblanc (1774–1846)
Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres
Oil on canvas, 47 5/8 x 37 5/8 in.

Figure 8



A Maid Asleep
Johannes Vermeer
Oil on Canvas, 34 1/2 x 30 1/8 in.

Figure 9



Young Woman with Water Pitcher
Johannes Vermeer
Oil on Canvas, 18 x 16 in.

Figure 10



Burlap
Isabella King
Oil on Canvas, 60 x 84 in.

Figure 11



Detail from, *Burlap*
Isabella King
Oil on Canvas, 60 x 84 in.

Figure 12



Three Knots on Indian Chintz
Isabella King
Oil on Curtain, 38 x 76 in.

Figure 13



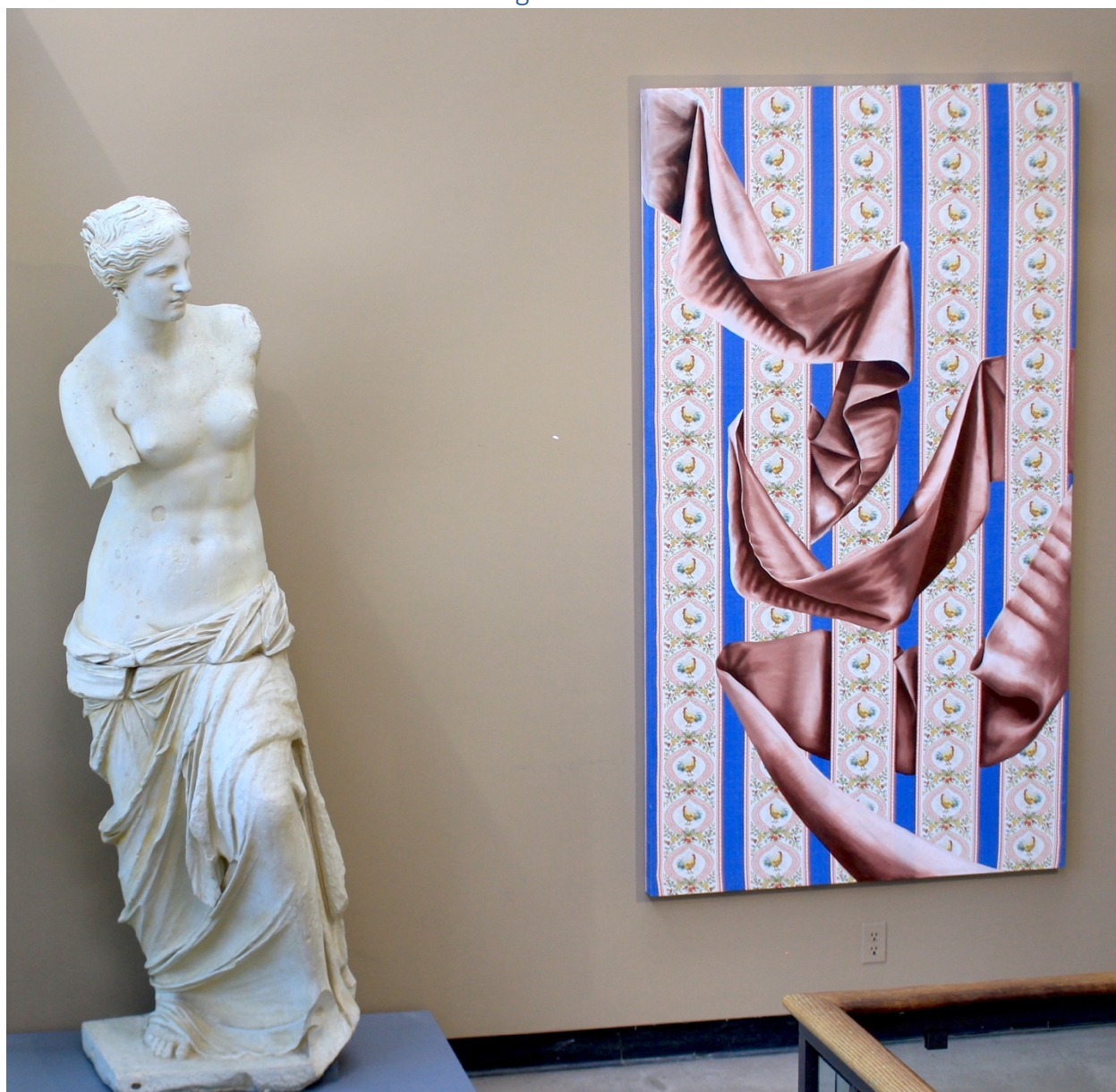
Details from *Baroque Chicken Meets the History of Drapery Painting*

Figure 14



Baroque Chicken Meets the History of Drapery Painting
Isabella King
Oil on Curtain, 45 ½ x 80 in.

Figure 14 A



Baroque Chicken Meets the History of Drapery Painting installed beside the Venus in Jewett Sculpture Court

Figure 15

*Ribbons Series: Domestic Camouflage 1*

Isabella King

Oil on Curtain, 40 x 40 in.

Figure 16



Ribbons Series: Domestic Camouflage 2

Isabella King

Oil on Curtain, 40 x 40 in.

Figure 17



Victoria and Albert Museum Collection

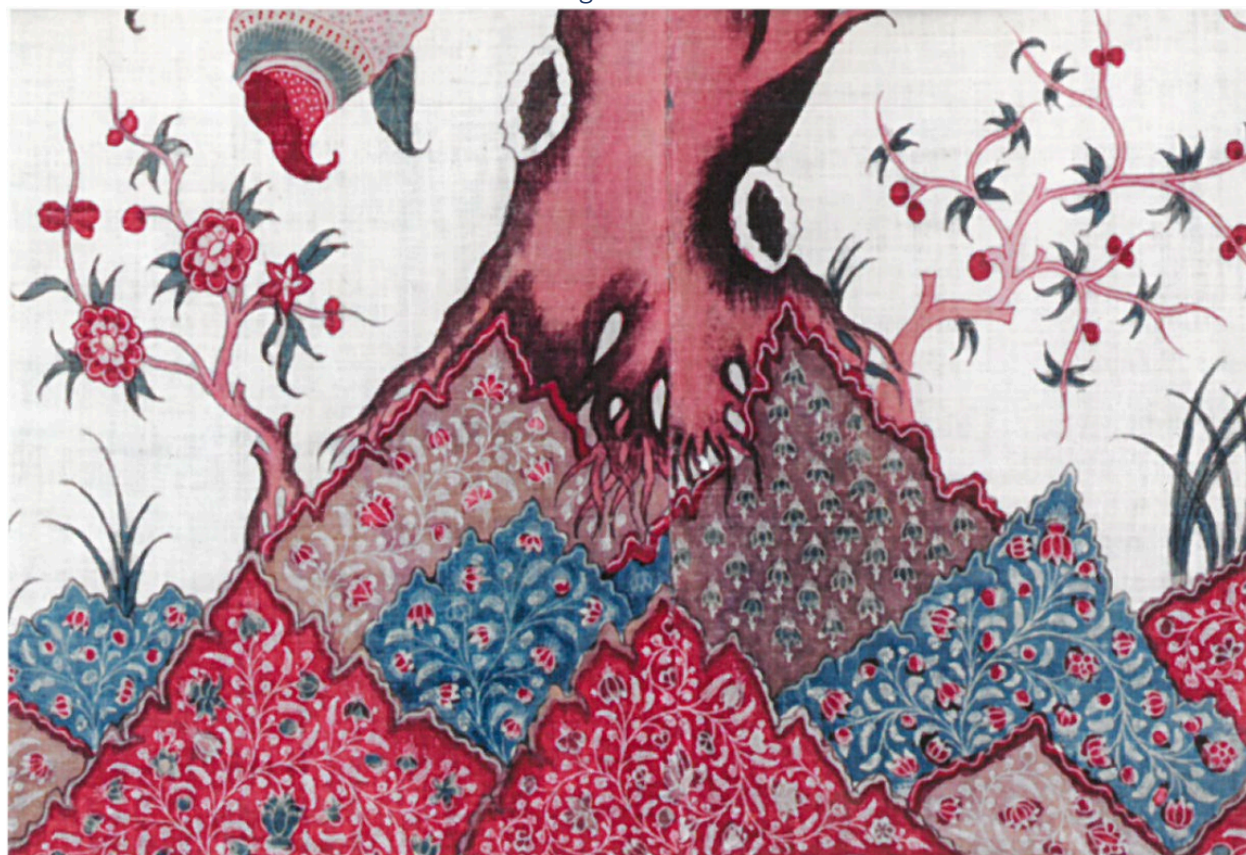
Plate from *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West*

Part of a hanging or bed-cover. Cotton, mordant-dyed and resist dyed, with yellow over-painting.

Coromandel Coast, c 1700-25.

210.8 x 210.8 cm

Figure 17 A



Detail from figure 17

Figure 18



Fig. 12. Embroidered hanging. English, 3rd quarter of 17th century.
228.5cm × 116.9cm. *Victoria and Albert Museum*, acc. no. 521-1896

From *Origins of Chintz* (22)

Figure 19



Madame de Pompadour
François-Hubert Drouais, 1764
Oil on Canvas

Figure 20



Quilted
Isabella King
Oil on Curtains, 85 x 94 in.

Figure 20 A



Quilted to be installed in Jewett Sculpture Court
Isabella King
Oil on Curtains, 85 x 94 in.

Figure 20 B



Detail from *Quilted*

Figure 20 C

Detail from *Quilted*

Figure 20 D

Detail from *Quilted*

Figure 21



In the Dirt: Tree of Life
Isabella King
Oil on curtain, 35 x 66 in.

Figure 21 A



Detail from, *In the Dirt: Tree of Life*

Isabella King

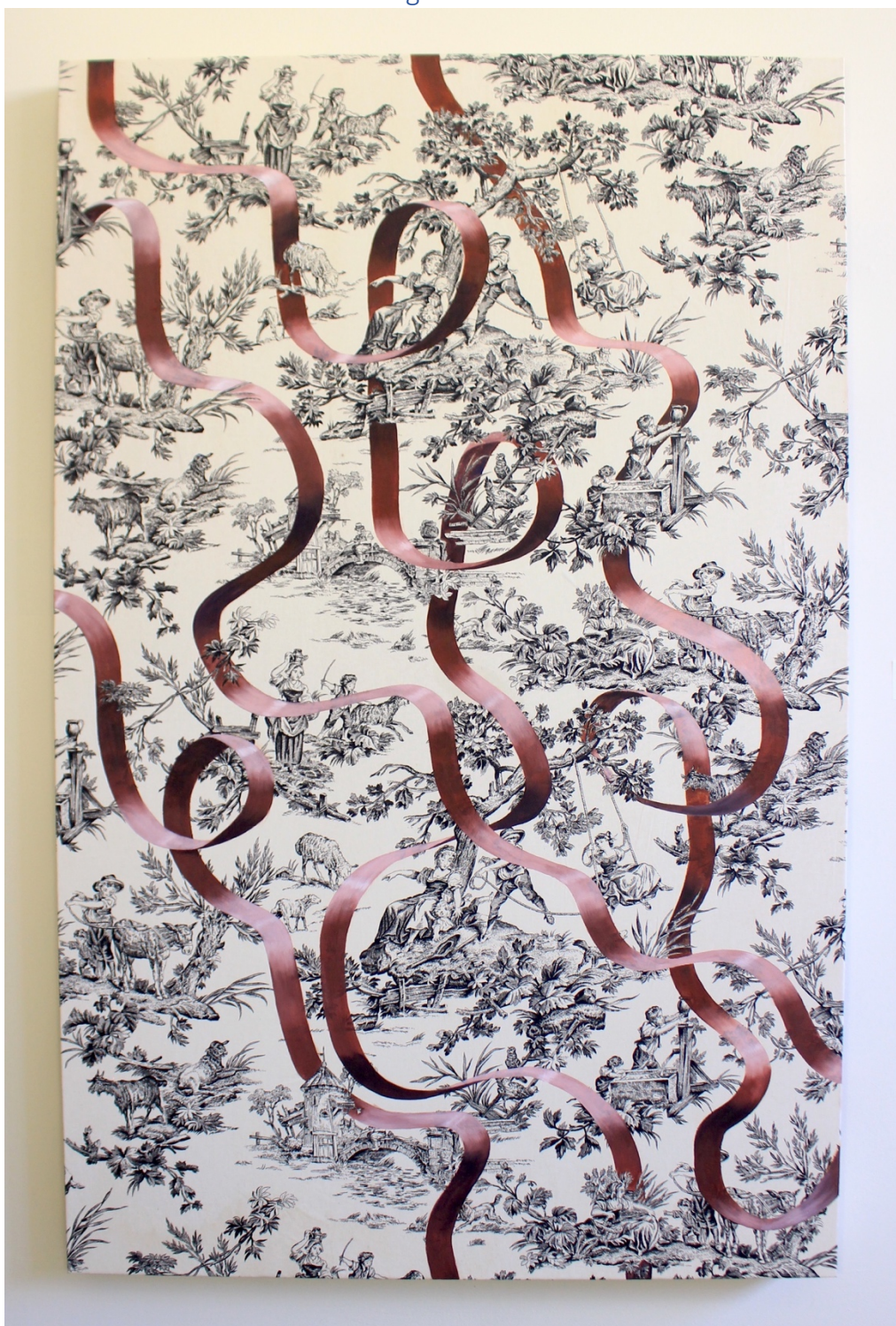
Oil on curtain, 35 x 66 in.

Figure 22



Process work for, *Ribbons Series: Bucolic Scene*
Isabella King
Oil on Curtain, 35 x 56 in.

Figure 22 A



Ribbons Series: Bucolic Scene
Isabella King
Oil on Curtain, 35 x 56 in.

Figure 22 B

Details from *Ribbons Series: Bucolic Scene*

Figure 23



Addendum

As mentioned in the above main text, I did not make any work using curtains or fabric for three weeks following my initial research into the complicated history of chintz fabrics and the abuses of the textile industry. I did, however, produce a number of found-image collages, some of which are included in the addendum figures below. Looking back now, I realize that by making these collages I was trying to reaffirm the issues that I am drawn to in my artistic practice outside of this thesis project. Specifically, I explored themes of feminism, commercialism, appropriation, re-appropriation, and the over-saturation of images in our present culture that allows problematically complacent viewing.

My series, *Pearlstein's Girls (Let me Bleed)*, addresses what I see as an inaccurate and penetrating male gaze. Though an accomplished artist, I find Phillip Pearlstein's figure paintings, especially those of women, to be incredibly stiff and deadened, following an anatomical structure not found in life. Angles protrude in painful directions and breasts become hard surfaces. Their bodies are meant to be viewed, not meant to be lived. For my collages, I deconstructed a catalogue of his work, and incorporated external elements such as flowers and texture. Many of the sections representing blood are cut from photographs of abstract works by artists that used red. Some of my other collages, most notably *Mother Hen* and *Concha* explore similar themes of feminism, female sexuality, and reproduction (figures A & K).

Though not directly related, these collages touch on themes found in the context of my overall thesis work. As with the curtains, the images used in my collages are found objects. They, like the patterns of fabrics, play into, and subsequently question the larger visual

language of our culture. These images too, have been detached from their original contexts—magazines and art catalogues—and re-contextualized. By removing these images from their original context, I am also removing the structures which would normally allow the viewer to complacently consume them.

Addendum: Figures

Figure A



Mother Hen
Isabella King
Found Image Collage, 5 x 7 in.

Figure B



Canned World
Isabella King
Found Image Collage, 5 x 7 in.

Figure C



Ogling the Moon
Isabella King
Found Image Collage, 5 x 7 in.

Figure D



Dove
Isabella King
Found Image Collage, 8 x 10 in.

Figure E



I Really Believe in the Power of Visualization
Isabella King
Found Image Collage, 8 x 10 in.

Figure F



Pearlstein's Girls (Let Me Bleed) I
Isabella King
Found Image Collage, 5 x 7 in.

Figure G



Pearlstein's Girls (Let Me Bleed) II
Isabella King
Found Image Collage, 5 x 7 in.

Figure H



Pearlstein's Girls (Let Me Bleed) III
Isabella King
Found Image Collage, 8 x 10 in.

Figure I



Pearlstein's Girls (Let Me Bleed) IV
Isabella King
Found Image Collage, 8 x 10 in.

Figure J



A Dog's Shrine
Isabella King
Found Image Collage, 5 x 7 in.

Figure K



Concha
Isabella King
Found Image Collage, 5 x 7 in.

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